

Middlesbrough — what an incentive for the Blues!

A HOME tie against Middlesbrough. That's the prize for Wycombe Wanderers if they can overcome the challenge of Bournemouth in tomorrow's (Wednesday) replay at Dean Court.

Wycombe fans did not have to wait long to hear the draw on B.B.C.'s Match of the Day on Saturday night. In fact Wycombe's number — 64 — was the very first name out of the hat, somewhat ironic considering this was Wanderers' first appearance in the third round draw. The club that followed it was none other than Jack Charlton's Division One title challengers Middlesbrough, currently seventh in the table.

But about a quarter way through the draw the 'Beeb' made a boob. The name Middlesbrough cropped up twice, this time away to Coventry City. After some consultation, however, it was established that Norwich City will meet Coventry.

The Middlesbrough draw is the best possible incentive for the Blues to win their replay against Bournemouth. The Yorkshire club are the Second Division champions and are in with a chance of the first division championship this season.

They have already stamped their mark this season, losing only six times in their 22 matches.

Manager Charlton, of course, needs no introduction. The former England and Leeds United centre half, 'Big Jack', only went into football management last season and ended up with a championship under his belt at the first attempt.

If they beat Bournemouth tomorrow, Wanderers will have to make the decision whether to play the match at Loakes Park as scheduled. On Saturday, Middlesbrough attracted 23,737 people to Ayresome Park for their league match against Birmingham — a fair gate considering this is traditionally a poor period for attendances. What attendance the possible visit of Wycombe would attract is another matter.

To stay faithful to their supporters it is most likely they will decide to play it at home — like Sutton who drew Leeds United after five years back. They staged the match at their Gander Green Lane ground.

A decision on the venue will be decided this week and whatever the outcome, there's no getting away from the fact that this is a dream draw — one that must have excited the thousands of Wycombe and minor football followers. To have reached the third round draw is a feat in itself. To have been drawn with Middlesbrough is something else!

The Middlesbrough team need very little introduction. Big Jim Platt, the goalkeeper, has been seen in action on television more than once this season while veteran John

Craggs and Frank Spraggon are the full backs. In the centre of defence are the blond Stuart Boam and Willie Maddren, tipped by many for an England cap this season and a member of Don Revie's squad.

In midfield Graeme Souness has been hitting the headlines all season and a Scotland international while Bobby Murdoch is the former Celtic star and another Scottish cap. The other midfield man is Patterson.

Up front Alan Foggan has 13 goals to his credit this season and scored in the 3-0 win over Birmingham City on Saturday. The other goalscorer was John Hickton, a Middlesbrough player for many seasons and the club's regular top goalscorer over the years. Partnering this duo up front is Dave Armstrong, another highly rated player.

And with Brighton's 4-0 defeat at home to Walton still fresh in their mind, the Tanners could well be in with a chance although Brighton boss Peter Taylor has a completely new staff now.

Wimbledon, with several of the Walton side that beat Brighton now in their ranks, travel to first division Burnley. Despite the fact that this tie is unlikely to attract more than about 15,000, no doubt the Dons are pleased to be playing the Division One club.

Wigan, held to a 1-1 draw by Mansfield, must fancy their chances at home to Cambridge United if they can win the replay while Stafford Rangers could well make the fourth round at home to Rotherham.

All that adds up to a team that has surprised many in their first season in Division One for 20 years.

What now remains to be seen is if Wanderers can win themselves this chance of a lifetime in the replay.

Of the five non-league teams left in the competition, Northern Premier Leaguers Altrincham have the best draw. They travel to mighty Goodison Park to take on the new Football League leaders Everton.

Leatherhead, Wycombe's fellow Rothmans Isthmian Leaguers, must have been disappointed not to meet a first or second division side but if they had to play any third or fourth division team — it would probably have been Brighton, who despite the lowly position, still command a sizeable crowd.